

PETITION

FROM THE

PEOPLE OF LOUISIANA TO CONGRESS

FOR THE RELIEF OF THE

NEW ORLEANS, OPELOUSAS AND GREAT
WESTERN RAILROAD COMPANY.

The Memorial of the Company and other Documents.

WITH AN APPENDIX.



WASHINGTON, D. C.:
McGILL & WITHEROW, PRINTERS AND STEREOTYPERs.

1868.

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NEW ORLEANS AND OPELOUSAS R.R.

No. 1.

To the Honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled.

The petition of the citizens of Louisiana, in behalf of the New Orleans, Opelousas, and Great Western Railroad Company, respectfully represents:

That your petitioners are all looking with deep interest to the successful and immediate completion of the New Orleans, Opelousas, and Great Western railroad to the Texas line, as the great means of developing the agricultural resources of the States of Texas and Louisiana, as well as the commercial advancement of the cities to which their products look for a market.

This road, when completed, will be the continuation of the great internal Atlantic coast line from Maine through the city of New Orleans, and our richest sugar-producing lands westward, to the vast wheat, cotton, and sugar regions of Texas, and in time not far distant, we hope, to the Pacific coast, as intended by its original projectors.

As evidence of the estimation in which this enterprise is held by our community, we need only to allude to the fact, that \$3,025,000, more than one-half of the entire capital of the company, as fixed by its charter, has been subscribed by the State of Louisiana, New Orleans, and several of the parishes along the line of its road, respectively.

The United States have a deep interest in its completion for the enhanced value of their land which would thus be brought about, and for the transportation of mails and troops; the road, notwithstanding its limited extent, having already proven of great value to the United States during the late war. Northern capitalists have not failed to recognize the importance and value of this road, as is evidenced by their investments in its construction-bonds, and stock.

Your petitioners humbly pray that your honorable body will vouchsafe to grant the prayer of the railroad company to reinstate its land-grant, extend the time for completion

of the road, and to authorize the adjustment and liquidation of its open accounts with the Government.

And your petitioners will ever pray.

[Here follow the signatures of thousands of citizens of Louisiana, in New Orleans, Tigerville, parishes Terrebonne, La Fayette, &c., measuring forty feet long. The following are a few of the names:]

Pike Lepeyre & Brothers, bankers.	C. Cammack, paying-teller Citizens' Bank.
H. Doane, vice president Factors and Traders' Insurance Company.	A. Chaipella, president Union Insurance Company.
J. Madison Wells, ex-Governor of Louisiana.	E. J. Forstall, agent B. Bros & Co.
J. R. Wooldridge, acting postmaster.	W. H. Letchford & Co., wholesale dry-goods.
J. N. Lea, member of the bar.	T. Gilmore, attorney-at-law.
Alfred Moulton, president Home Insurance Company.	Charles Pitts, secretary of Crescent City Railroad Company.
T. A. Adams, president Board of Under-writers.	Smith, Newman & Co., bankers.
Thomas Sloo, president Sun Mutual Insurance Company.	Burke & Co., bankers.
George Jonas, president Canal Bank.	J. Lawson Lewis.
Jules A. Blanc, president Louisiana State Bank.	Walton & Deslonde, auctioneers.
J. M. Reed, superintendent Carrollton railroad.	W. Henderson, firm of Henderson & Gaines.
E. Ridgney, president Atlantic Insurance Company.	Gaines & Relf, wholesale crockery dealers.
John Pemberton, president Merchants' Insurance Company.	J. Burnside.
John J. Adams & Co., wholesale grocers.	McStea & Value, wholesale dry-goods.
Henry Peychaud, president Hope Insurance Company.	David McCord, president Crescent City Railroad Company.
Slocum, Baldwin & Co., wholesale hardware.	Stone & Murphy, dealers in b. and rope.
Stark, Stouffer & Co., wholesale hardware.	A. M. Fortune, president Bank of America.
Adam Griffin, State Treasurer.	E. R. Whittaker, auditor, custom house.
H. Peralta, State Auditor.	Jona C. White, naval officer, custom house.
A. Carriene, president P. T. Citizens' Bank.	J. A. Stockdale, deputy collector, custom house.
H. H. Comfort.	E. Roucheau & Co., commission merchants.
L. Faust.	A. D. Grief & Co., wholesale grocers.
Robert Flynn.	J. R. West.
J. W. Harrison.	Christian W. Wallace.
Charles Yates.	O. B. Boisfontaine.
Thomas K. Lanagan.	Mick. Monion.
John French.	Thomas B. Wilder.
John Williams.	Charles Loeffler.
G. O. Warrington.	William H. Nelson.
Henry C. Bartlett.	Joseph Gorlinski.
Charles H. Morgan.	Charles E. Whitmore.
James Jackson.	Thomas F. Neice.
Samuel Neiss.	William Hallemback.
John Durkin, jr.	Leon Prats.
	William John Black.
	W. G. Valentine.
	David Barry.
	John H. Gerrisson.
	Orrin Call.
	E. E. Colquhoun.
	Pat. Creagh.
	Jacob Hizer.
	Ben. Thibodeaux.
	T. V. Coupland.
	G. Labarre.
	Gardner Banks.
	E. H. Riddell.
	Arth. Roux.
	L. J. Coiron.
	C. Weingart.

Flavius Le Besque.	T. B. Bernard.	George Selby.
Warren Stow.	Thomas Roux.	J. A. Charbonne.
A. R. Ringold.	Henry Gormley.	T. A. Wier.
C. W. Ringold.	O. L. Gardner.	James Wilder.
Charles E. Ingalls.	Alfred Russell.	James Nowell.
Frank H. Green.	George H. Abbott.	Daniel Walker.
P. E. Bechtel.	John S. Marsh.	Aaron Green.
D. S. Baker.	John Timberlake.	Mark Jackson.
John H. H. Taylor.	C. H. Shute.	A. D. Salvant.
Frederick K. Sturgis.	A. T. Benedic.	A. Martin.
Charles E. Whitmore.	John S. Nissell.	J. B. Flotte.
G. O. Godwin.	James H. Wright.	J. M. Johnson.
O. L. Taylor.	A. J. Young.	Edmund O'Brien Butler.
J. D. Crawford.	J. W. Farr.	G. Nungesser.
Philip Winfree.	John D. Hardy.	Aug. Couturier & Co.
John Devonshire, jr.	Joseph W. Brown.	Eug. La Coste.
Henry Webber.	Henry Post.	William Glannen.
J. E. Sewell.	J. A. De Blanc.	John Lefevre.
James McK. Richards.	George H. Hartwell.	T. Bailley Blanchard, jr.
H. J. Samson.	Allen Calwell.	J. G. Spor.
W. T. St. Preiss.	Edward W. Mills.	A. Smith.
Gus. Hollander.	Joseph Gros.	Louis A. Godefroy.
Thomas H. Jenks.	Jules Dossal.	Carriene & Logan.

No. 2.

MAYORALTY OF NEW ORLEANS,
CITY HALL, December 4, 1867.

Whereas by the act of Congress, approved 3d June, 1856, a grant of public land was made, to aid in the construction of the New Orleans, Opelousas and Great Western Railroad in Louisiana, to be completed within ten years from the date of said act, which limitation expired on the 3d of June, 1866; and whereas, in view of the vital importance of said road, the State, the city of New Orleans, and certain parishes, as authorized by acts of Assembly, subscribed to the original stock of the company \$1,200,000, \$1,500,000, and \$325,000, respectively, amounting in the aggregate to \$3,025,000, or more than one-half of the whole capital stock, limited by its charter to \$6,000,000; and whereas said Railroad Company are about to petition Congress for an act of relief, to reinstate its land-grant, extend the time allowed for the completion of the road; and, in consideration of its services since the capture of the city, in 1862, to authorize the adjustment and liquidation of its open accounts with the Government; therefore, be it

1. *Resolved by the Mayor and City Council of New Orleans,*
That, beyond the heavy stock investments of the State and

city, in said road, we look to it and its connections as one of the most efficient means of building up our city and developing the commercial, agricultural, and manufacturing resources not only of Louisiana, but of Texas, and evidently of all the States of the Union, being, in fact, a continuation of the great internal coast line of railroad from the State of Maine to the Pacific ocean.

2. *Resolved*, That we most cordially unite in the prayer of the railroad company and of our citizens, and trust that Congress will grant the relief asked.

3. *Resolved*, That the mayor communicate copies hereof, in triplicate, to the president of the railroad company, to accompany the petition to Congress.

(Signed) F. H. PERKINS,
President pro tem. Board of Assistant Aldermen.

(Signed) JAMES GRAHAM,
President Board of Aldermen.

Approved December 4, 1867.

(Signed) E. HEATH, *Mayor.*
 True copy. GEORGE F. CHILDS, *Secretary.*

[L. s.]

No. 3.

At a meeting of the Chamber of Commerce of the city of New Orleans, held on the 4th of November, 1867, the following resolution was unanimously adopted:

Resolved, That the Chamber, duly appreciating the financial and commercial importance of the New Orleans, Opolousas and Great Western railroad to our city and State and our whole people, without respect to class, party, or race, and the immense increase of trade with the rich wheat, cotton and sugar-growing regions of Texas which will pour into our city when completed, most earnestly and cordially unite in the prayer of the company in their petition to Congress for an act of relief to reinstate its land-grant, give further time for the completion of the road, and authorize the adjustment and liquidation of its open accounts with the Government, and that certified copies in triplicate of this resolution be sent to the president of the road, to accompany the petition.

ALF. MOULTON,

President New Orleans Chamber of Commerce.

Attest:

TH. J. DIX, *Secretary pro tem.*

No. 4.

Whereas the Mechanics' and Agricultural Fair Association have learned that the people of the city of New Orleans and of the State of Louisiana, in very great numbers, have addressed petitions to the Congress of the United States, inviting their attention to, and asking an extension of, the land-grant made to the New Orleans, Opelousas and Great Western Railroad Company, under the act of June 3, 1856, for the purpose of enabling the said company to build its road to the Texas line, and for an adjustment of their claim with the Government; and whereas this association fully appreciates the importance of building this road, for the development and prosperity of the States of Louisiana and Texas, and of the great advantages of such a road to the Government of the United States itself;

Resolved, That this association cheerfully joins in the petition for the extension of time within which the company must build its road to enjoy the full benefit of the grant; and they ask of Congress, also, the adjustment of the unsettled account of said company.

Resolved, That an official copy of these preamble and resolutions be forwarded to the New Orleans, Opelousas and Great Western Railroad Company.

J. N. MARKS, *President.*

[L. S.]

THOMAS G. RHETT,
Secretary and Superintendent.

No. 5

To the Honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled:

The petition of the New Orleans, Opelousas, and Great Western Railroad Company, incorporated by the State of Louisiana, by act of Assembly approved 22d April, 1853, No. 149, respectfully represents:

That, by the act of 3d June, 1856, a land-grant was made by Congress to the State of Louisiana, to aid in the construction of said road, which was duly accepted on the part of the State, and assigned to this company by an act of the General Assembly, approved March 16, 1857. That by the provisions of the fourth section of the law of Congress, the road was to have been completed within ten years; that is, by the 3d

June, 1866, or otherwise the unsold lands should revert to the United States. That, acting in good faith, your petitioners, with their own means and the substantial aid furnished by the State of Louisiana, the city of New Orleans, and certain parishes, completed, equipped, and put in operation eighty miles of its road—by far the most difficult and costly part of the route, being rather a *bridge* than a road-bed, over broad swamps and “trembling prairies,” from Algiers, opposite New Orleans, to Brashear, (Berwick’s Bay,)—graduated the line ready for the track about eighty miles further, to a point near Opelousas, and accumulated large quantities of material necessary for the construction and operation thereof, without trenching on the donated lands to the amount of \$500, having determined to reserve the same, and the proceeds thereof, for the completion of the road from Opelousas to its western terminus on the Sabine river or Texas boundary, for which latter purpose all the preliminary arrangements, as far as practicable, had been made to insure the completion of the entire road within the ten years prescribed by law; but, unfortunately, the war came upon them—a matter entirely beyond their control, and with which they, as a corporation, could have no official connection—and not only suspended operations for more than five years; but all of their accumulated new material, and the major portion of their rolling stock and railroad stores, after the capture of New Orleans, in April, 1862, not necessary for the defence of the city, were transferred from time to time by the Federal officers to the States of Arkansas, Alabama, and Texas, where it was used in sustaining the armies of the United States. Their machine shops also became, during the whole period, the chief establishment for the manufacture and general repairs of railroad stock and steamboats.

That the relations of the managers of this railroad company to the Government, from the first day of the capture of New Orleans, have been entirely friendly, and that the legal existence of the corporation was at all times officially recognized by Major Generals Butler, Banks, and Canby, the military governor, General Shepley, and the acting mayors of New Orleans, and their subordinate officers, as can be fully shown by the records. That from that early period of the war, 1st May, 1862, to its close, during which, and until the transfer of the road to the company again, 1st February, 1866, the United States Government, through its officers, have had the free occupation and use of its road, material, and machinery for military purposes, having, the first night

of the capture of the city, quartered Colonel McMillan's Indiana regiment in their spacious depot at Algiers, and suspended the running of its trains. That the company never ceased to keep up its organization under their charter, and was directly recognized by Major General Butler, in his public order No. 20, of 3d May, 1862, immediately after the capture of the city, by requesting the president and company to go on and continue to operate their road, which was over and above the immunities and protection promised in his admirable, just, and liberal public proclamation of 1st May; by Major Generals Banks and Canby in various ways, during their commands; by the regular appointment of State and city directors, in accordance with the charter; by the military governor of the State, and different military mayors of New Orleans; and in return, every order or requisition of public officers was promptly and faithfully fulfilled by the company. Besides, a large amount of its stock and bonds are held and owned by citizens in New York and other Northern cities, whose interests are of course deeply involved in the success and welfare of the road; and the State of Louisiana, the city of New Orleans, and sundry parishes of the State, having immediately subscribed to the stock of the company \$1,200,000, \$1,500,000, and \$325,000, respectively amounting in the aggregate to \$3,025,000, more than one-half the capital of the company, which is limited by the charter to \$6,000,000, shows the high estimation in which this work is held by the citizens of Louisiana, as well as their heavy stake in the issue, and furnishes some evidence of its vital importance to the public. Indeed, the colored citizens, the freedmen, look to its early extension with the keenest interest, as the only means of opening a direct and cheap communication between New Orleans and their new homes, upon which event, they are well aware, will mainly depend the success of their settlements and the colonies which they have in contemplation to form along the route.

In this connection, and as a part of the history of their land grants, your petitioners call the attention of your honorable bodies to the fact that, under the apparent equity involved, the land department at Washington has persistently withheld the lands within the sections donated to Louisiana for railroad purposes from sale, and has so instructed the Louisiana land-offices. That, before the expiration of the ten years' limitation, at the session of Congress commencing December, 1865, a memorial was sent to your honorable body from the company, which was referred to the

honorable Committee on Public Lands of the Senate, praying, for reasons therein stated, an extension of the time for eight years. The honorable Senate thereupon passed an act accordingly, (S. Act No. 83, 1st session 39th Congress,) which only failed in the House, as the company were afterwards informed, for political considerations, as it was not then deemed expedient, even thus indirectly, to recognize the Southern States as States, which objection, if known in time, could, perhaps, have been obviated by wording the proposed law so as to deal directly with the railroad company, and through them the people of the State, the real parties in interest, as it is now proposed to do.

Your petitioners therefore, under all the circumstances above mentioned, humbly pray your honorable bodies to grant them a special act of relief, reinstating their land grant as it stood on the 3d June, 1866, when the ten years' limitation expired, extending the time allowed for the completion of the road eight years, as has been accorded to all the Northern land-grant roads, including those in Arkansas and Missouri; and in consideration of their services as a company, to authorize the adjustment and liquidation, by the proper officers of the Treasury, of their open accounts for private freights, engines, cars, steamboat and barge, and other railroad property, and for the transportation of the United States mails, as set forth and respectfully submitted in the accompanying form of a bill, marked A.

And your petitioners will ever pray.

By order of the board of directors.

A. B. SEGERS, *President.*

Attest:

GEO. W. SQUIRES, *Secretary.*

[L. S.]

No. 5a.

A bill for the relief of the New Orleans, Opelousas, and Great Western Railroad Company, of Louisiana.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the grant of public lands made by the act of the third of June, eighteen hundred and fifty-six, to aid in the construction of the New Orleans, Opelousas, and Great Western railroad, in Louisiana, to be completed in ten years, be, and the same is hereby,

reinstated, with all its rights, privileges, and conditions as they existed on the third day of June, eighteen hundred and sixty-six: *Provided*, That the construction of said road shall be completed within eight years from the date of this act: and in consideration of the services of said road and company, rendered the United States during the late war and since the capture of New Orleans, the proper officers of the Treasury are hereby authorized and required to adjust and liquidate the open accounts of said company with the Departments of the General Post Office and the Quartermaster General.

No. 6.

Statement of amount paid by the New Orleans, Opelousas, and Great Western Railroad Company to the United States Government, on account of bond given for rolling stock and materials transferred by the United States to said railroad company.

1866.

February 1. Amount of bond payable in 2 years by instalments, \$113,773 45

CR.

April	30.	By cash paid instalment and interest...	\$14,394 71
August	3.	do. do. do.	14,754 94
October	13.	do. do. do.	13,999 04
October	13.	By mail service.....	2,304 15
December	31.	By cash paid instalment and interest...	13,109 96

1867.

January	28.	By cash paid instalment and interest...	5,122 65
January	31.	By mail service	1,994 37
February	28.	By transportation of freights and passengers.....	230 26
February	28.	By cash paid instalment and interest...	2,823 33
April	4.	By transportation of freight.....	9 00
April	5.	By cash paid instalment.	5,116 01
May	9.	By mail service.....	1,994 37
August	31.	By transportation of freights	108 08
September	14.	By mail service.....	2,000 00
October	16.	By transportation freight and passengers	706 62
October	25.	By mail service.....	2,000 00
November	30.	By transportation of freights and passengers.....	400 31
			\$81,067 80

Total amount of principal and interest paid to the United States Government, by the New Orleans, Opelousas, and Great Western Railroad Company, up to November 30,

1867, eighty-one thousand sixty-seven dollars and eighty cents.

Attest:

A true copy from the books of the company of the New [L. S.] Orleans, Opelousas, and Great Western Railroad Company, December 14, 1867.

GEORGE W. SQUIRES,
Secretary.

No. 7.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
GENERAL LAND OFFICE, December 28, 1867.

WILLIAM T. STEIGER, Esq.,

*Agent New Orleans, Opelousas, and Great
Western Railroad, Washington, D. C.*

SIR: In reply to the inquiries contained in your letters of the 23d inst., I have to state, that under the grant contemplated by the act of June 3, 1856, the following is a statement of the quantity of land which was certified to the State, to aid in the construction of the New Orleans, Opelousas, and Great Western railroad of Louisiana, along the three several sections of the line described, to wit:

1. From New Orleans to Berwick's bay, rejected swamp selections.....	48,136.94
Other vacant lands.....	1,738.16
	49,875.10
2. From Berwick's bay to Opelousas.....	57,967.05
3. From Opelousas to the Sabine river.....	611,351.60
Total.....	719,193.75

And that along the portion of the line from Opelousas to the Sabine river, the quantity of 778,880 acres remains vacant and subject to homestead entry. The condition of the statute of 1856, however, is that the road was to be completed within ten years from its date, a compliance being necessary before the grant became effective.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JOSEPH S. WILSON,
Commissioner.

NOTE.—The above shows only 1,738 acres of good land between New Orleans and Berwick's bay, and that the great bulk of the road and Government lands lie west of Opelousas.

W. T. S.

APPENDIX.

No. 1.

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF THE GULF,
NEW ORLEANS, *May 1, 1862.*

* * * *

“All persons well disposed to the United States, who shall renew their allegiance, will receive safeguard and protection in their persons and property by the armies of the United States, a violation of which will be punishable by death.”

* * * *

“All persons who may heretofore have given adhesion to the supposed Government of the Confederate States, or have been in their service, who shall lay down or deliver up their arms, return to their peaceful occupations, and preserve quiet and order, holding no further correspondence, nor giving aid and comfort to the enemies of the United States, will not be disturbed in person or property, except so far, under orders of the commanding general, as the exigencies of the public service may render necessary.”

* * * *

“All rights of property, of whatever kind, will be held inviolate, subject only to the laws of the United States.”

* * * *

“By command of Major General Butler:

“G. B. STRONG, *Ass't Adj't Gen., Chief of Staff.*”

(See Moore's Rebellion Record, documents 1, vol. 5, page 1.)

No. 2.

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF THE GULF,
NEW ORLEANS, *May 3, 1862.*

GENERAL ORDERS, }
No. 20. }

The president, directors, and company of the Opelousas railroad are authorized and required to run their cars over

the road, for the purpose of bringing to the city of New Orleans provisions, marketing, and supplies of food, which may be offered, in order to supply the wants of the city.

No passengers are to be permitted to come into the city, and none others are to leave the city. All other supplies are prohibited transportation over the road either way, except cotton and sugar, which may be safely brought over the road, and will be purchased at the fair market value, by the United States, in specie. The transmission of live stock is especially enjoined. An agent of the city government will be allowed to pass over the road either way, stopping at all points, on the faith of a pledge of such government agent that he transmits no intelligence, and affords no aid to the Confederates.

The officer commanding the post having the terminus of such road within his pickets, will cause a thorough inspection of the cars and boats, for the purpose of furthering this order, and will offer no further hindrance so long as this order is in good faith complied with.

By command of Major General Butler.

G. C. STRONG, *A. A. Gen.*

No. 3.

STATE OF LOUISIANA, EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT,
NEW ORLEANS, *February 4, 1863.*

SPECIAL ORDER, }
No. 23. }

J. Q. A. Fellows, H. F. Vennard, and John A. Hitchcock are hereby appointed directors, on the part of the State of Louisiana, of the New Orleans, Opelousas, and Great Western Railroad Company.

By order of

Brig. Gen. G. F. SHIPLEY,
Military Governor of Louisiana.

JAMES F. MILLER,
Ass't Adj't General.

No. 4.

STATE OF LOUISIANA, MAYORALTY OF NEW ORLEANS,
CITY HALL, *April 6, 1864.*

GENTLEMEN: You are hereby appointed directors of the

Opelousas Railroad Company, on the part of the city of New Orleans.

Will you take immediate steps for an investigation of the affairs of said company, for the protection of the city interest therein, and report to this office.

By order :

STEPHEN HOYT,

Captain U. S. A., Acting Mayor.

D. L. GIBBINS, *Secretary.*

To A. F. COCHRAN,

G. W. R. BAYLEY,

GEO. F. BROTT,

New Orleans.

No. 5.

Extract from the Report of the chief engineer, (G. W. R. Bayley), accompanying the annual report of the company of 1st January, 1867. (Page 58.)

"The first division of eighty miles, extending to Berwick's Bay, (Brashear City,) was completed in 1857, and has been regularly operated since. The first twenty-four miles extends up the right bank of the Mississippi river to Boutte station, in the parish of St. Charles; thence the line follows a ridge of high and fertile land, now settled throughout, for eight miles, to the Bayou Des Allemands, the natural drain of the basin between the Mississippi and Bayou Lafourche. From Des Allemands, at the thirty-second mile, the line crosses a *marshy prairie*, containing islands of cypress timber, for *six miles*, and then reaches the high lands of Bayou Lafourche. At Raceland station, forty miles from Algiers, a branch track of two miles in length extends to the bank of the Lafourche. From Raceland the line runs up the left bank of the Bayou Lafourche twelve miles farther, to the Lafourche crossing, fifty-two miles. Between the Lafourche and Terrebonne the line crosses the *Lafourche and Devil's swamp* and the Bayou L'Eau Blue ridge. From Terrebonne station lines of omnibuses or carriages run to Thebodeaux and Houma. After leaving the Terrebonne highlands, the line crosses a *cypress swamp* four miles wide to the Chacahoula ridge, follows said ridge about two miles, crosses the *Tiger swamp*, and reaches the Bayou Black at Tigerville. The Bayou Black is navigable for steamboats

and schooners thence to the gulf, at Atchafalaya bay. From Tigerville the line runs down the right bank of the Black about three miles, crosses the L'Ourse ridge and the *Bœuf swamp*, *three miles wide*, to the Bayou *Bœuf*, seventy-three miles; from the *Bœuf* the line, after *crossing a swamp*, follows the Tiger Island highlands to Brashear, eighty miles."

He reports, 28th December, 1867: "Between Algiers and Brashear, (eighty miles,) we cross nine and a half miles of sea marsh and fifteen and a half miles of cypress swamp. (Total twenty-five miles.) All the lands (almost without exception) on this portion of our line are worthless sea-marsh, not worth five cents per acre. The high and good lands were all sold to individuals or donated to the State long before any grant was made."

No. 6.

From the New Orleans Crescent, October 20, 1867.

THE NEW ORLEANS AND GREAT WESTERN RAILROAD COMPANY.—Among the most important enterprises in which New Orleans and the people of Louisiana have an interest, is the completion of the New Orleans, Opelousas and Great Western railway to the Texas line. Both the city and State have a large and direct pecuniary concern in the successful prosecution of this great design. They, with certain parishes, hold more than one-half of the capital stock of the road. These enormous aids would not have been extended, but for manifest advantages to accrue from the completion of the work in accordance with the plans of its projectors. The railway will open up to immigration and development a very large and valuable but now useless area of this State, to the benefit of our home and foreign trade, and to the great increase of the valuation of the taxable property of Louisiana. It will give an impetus to production in parts of the State now under cultivation, by affording better access to our market. It will put us within easy reach of the great agricultural empire of Texas, for the possession of whose trade Northern cities are now making great exertions—exertions which are sure to be in a great measure successful, unless the Opelousas railway is speedily completed.

The States of Louisiana and Texas are not alone interested in this line of interior communication. It is one of the

links of the great chain of railways extending from Portland, Maine, along the entire eastern and southern border of the United States, and which must finally terminate on the Pacific. The commerce of the nation must ultimately be benefited by the construction of this road in accordance with its charter, to a degree we cannot now measure. The Government of the United States will share in the good it will confer, in the sale of public lands which will by it be brought into market, and in the advantages it will offer for the transportation of troops, mails, etc.

The interruption which was caused by the war in the building of this road has proved the source of a great danger to its prosperity. The land-grant which it received from the General Government has been withdrawn, owing to the non-completion of the road within the time specified. The company is also embarrassed by the fact that its dues from the Government, amounting to a large sum, have not been liquidated. If Congress will restore the land-grant and authorize the settlement of the accounts of the company with the Government, we may hope to see something like a decided renewal of progress in the construction of the road.

In consideration of these circumstances, the following petition to Congress has been drawn up, and on Monday will be at the counting-room of the *Crescent* and at the offices of the other city dailies, for signatures. We earnestly hope that our citizens will not neglect the opportunity thus offered to testify their sense of the importance of this great enterprise, and to contribute somewhat to its success:

From the New Orleans Tribune.

THE NEW ORLEANS, OPELOUSAS AND GREAT WESTERN RAIL-ROAD COMPANY.—Our readers will find in the advertising columns of the *Tribune* the form of a petition which is now in circulation, praying Congress to reinstate that company in its land-grant, extend the time for the completion of the road, and to authorize the adjustment and liquidation of its open accounts with the Government. The completion of this road will be a source of wealth, prosperity, and geographical importance for our city. Our citizens are too well animated with a spirit of enterprise not to contribute in the achievement of this great work. It will benefit every member of society. We expect to see the farms established all along the road, and the small cultivators able to send through

that road their products to the great mart of New Orleans. It must be borne in mind that this move comes from the people, and not from the company. We hope to see all our citizens sign this petition. It is of their interest to do so.

A copy of the petition will be found for signatures at the counting-room of every newspaper of our city.

From the New Orleans Republican, of October 20, 1867.

THE OPELOUSAS RAILROAD.—The charter for the New Orleans, Opelousas, and Great Western railroad contemplated the completion of the work from New Orleans to the Texas State line, but the war forcibly interrupted the building of the same, and left the terminus at Brashear City, to which point it had been completed before the rebellion. According to the terms of the grant of land, Congress required the road to be built and stocked within a prescribed time after the acceptance of the franchise. That the company entered upon the work in good faith, no one will deny. But they have as certainly failed, from no fault of their own, to succeed, and legally they have forfeited their right to title in the granted lands. And the same reasons which existed for the original grant, now bear with force upon the proposition to renew it. It is entirely within the power of Congress to renew the grant, by extending the time for the completion of the road to such reasonable period as may be necessary for the work.

The importance of this road to this State and Texas, as well as to the public land interest along its line, cannot be over-estimated. Every citizen of the two States has a direct pecuniary interest in its early completion. A copy of the petition has been left at our office for signatures, and we hope all who feel an interest in the matter will sign it. If enough names of the proper kind of persons can be obtained, there is little doubt that Congress will take prompt favorable action.

Without ample railroad facilities, New Orleans will be forced to fall back to a third or fourth-rate position in the rank of large cities, and see the immense trade to which her natural advantages entitle her diverted permanently into other channels. We have more real interest in the Opelousas railroad than we have in the Northern elections.

From the New Orleans Daily Picayune, of October 20, 1867.

THE OPELOUSAS RAILROAD.—Our readers will find below a memorial which commends itself to their most hearty and earnest support, whatever their political opinions or past predilections. The Opelousas railroad, which is chiefly owned by our State and city, and which has so far progressed towards the region of profit and plenty as to be in sight of the promised land, has, by the interruption of the war, and the occupation of the military forces, suffered a lapse of the grant of lands made to it conditionally by the United States Government. It is to the interest of every man, white and black, Federal and Confederate, rich or poor, Republican and Conservative, in this community, that the grant of lands to this road of the State and city should be renewed; that the adjoining lands be made profitable to those who enter or receive grants of them as bounties; that the trade which will come over it should give our poor men employment, and our rich men great increase of their wealth, and that the State and city should obtain value received for its expenditures, and thus every man be benefited by relief from his direct or indirect taxation.

The lists for subscription to this most important memorial will be found at the offices of the *Picayune, Bee, Times, Crescent, and Republican*, and Mr. George Ellis's book-store, opposite the post office.

From the New Orleans Daily Bee, of October 20, 1867.

THE NEW ORLEANS, OPELOUSAS, AND GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY.—Our readers are aware that this important enterprise was cut short by the advent of the war. Had not that paralyzing condition of things overtaken the operations of the company, we should ere now have been by this route in rail communication with the rich section of the State beyond the Atchafalaya, and with the great cities of Houston and Galveston, in Eastern Texas. This railroad was projected primarily with the object not only of giving an outlet by land to the Attakapas parishes—a speedy communication to Western Louisiana with the great market of New Orleans—but ultimately to form a link in the great chain of railroad between Texas and the Northern States, to bring Eastern Texas and the Mississippi within twenty-four hours' travel of each other, and to avoid the disagreeable and sometimes stormy sea passage by way of the Gulf, and thus open up a

most productive section of our State, hitherto comparatively shut off from communication with the outer world. It is not astonishing, when we consider the blighting effects of war, that the company have been unable to realize the grand anticipations of its projectors, and that they have been compelled to rest contented with a partial operation of the line; but it is essential to the prosperity of New Orleans, and of the country through which the road is intended to run, that the design of its originators should now be taken up and pushed forward, until the whole scheme shall have been completed. Such a movement is on foot. We publish to-day, in our advertising columns, the text of a petition prepared for the signature of our merchants and other citizens, and addressed to the Congress of the United States, setting forth the advantages to be gained by the two great States of Louisiana and Texas from a completion of this railroad, and praying that the grant of lands to the company, made by that body, might be reinstated, the time stipulated for the completion of the line extended, and the adjustment and liquidation of the open accounts of the Government with the company authorized. This petition may be signed at the office of the *Bee*, 73 Chartres street, and it is superfluous to urge the prompt co-operation of our mercantile friends in a matter so important to them and to all classes of the community.

All persons interested and disposed to join in the prayer of this petition, are invited to append their signatures to it, without loss of time.

From the New Orleans Times, of October 20, 1867.

Attention is specially directed to the petition elsewhere in behalf of the New Orleans, Opelousas, and Great Western Railroad Company. We are requested to state that copies of the same for signatures will be found at the offices of the *Times*, *Picayune*, *Bulletin*, *Crescent*, *Bee*, and *Republican*.

THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND THE OPELOUSAS RAILROAD.—The following shows that our Chamber of Commerce is alive to the interests which it represents, and is enlightenededly disposed to throw all its weight in favor of this as well as all other great and progressive movements of the day.

This road, which would have been more appropriately named

the New Orleans, Texas and Great Western Railway, is emphatically a trunk road, which, when it makes connections with Texas roads, will be one of the most important and heavily used thoroughfares on the continent. We except none. Roads through populous regions North have rival means of communication; but Texas, with no rivers which can be called navigable, except fitfully, and with no ports suitable for safe and extensive commerce, must be dependent on railroads; and unless we are supplanted by roads built northward, our city must do their business.

Why Congress should hesitate about restoring to this road its grant of lands and relieving it from paying for its own property, used profitably by the United States for over three years, we cannot see; for nearly all the paid up stock belongs to the State and city, whose governments are in the hands of the friends of Congress, and the debts due by the company are owing to northern men. The North, too, is as much interested as we in encouraging railway intercourse with Texas. In fact, as a military road, to be used by the Government, it would be, when completed, of vast usefulness to it. How can there be a moment's hesitation on the subject?

From the New Orleans Tribune, November 10, 1867.

THE NEW ORLEANS, OPELOUSAS AND GREAT WESTERN RAILROAD.—A petition at our office may be signed, praying Congress to reinstate to the Opelousas Railroad Company their land grant, as it stood when the limitation expired. We invite our fellow citizens, and more particularly our friends, to join in signing that petition.

The facts are these. By an act approved the 3d day of June, 1856, a land grant was made by Congress to the State of Louisiana, to aid in the construction of the New Orleans, Opelousas and Great Western Railroad. Said grant was assigned to the company by an act of the General Assembly of Louisiana, approved March 16, 1857. In the act of Congress it was provided that the road should be completed within ten years, and that in case of non-compliance with that provision, the unsold lands should revert to the United States, at the expiration of the period of ten years.

Now, that period has elapsed, and the road is not completed. But is the company in fault? The war has interfered with their work; the military authorities have seized a part of their material, and used their machine shop. During four years, out of

the ten given years, it was a matter of utter impossibility to advance the building up of that railroad.

Still the State at large and the city of New Orleans are greatly interested in the completion of the road. The Opelousas railway will be our great State thoroughfare towards the West. An immense traffic will be carried on through that road, with the Opelousas country, the whole western part of the State and the border counties of Texas. We must all desire that the company be reinstated into their grant, and that they be able to resume work.

The city of New Orleans has a peculiar interest in the matter. It has not only to look at the benefit that enterprise will bring upon the community at large; but it holds \$1,500,000 of the stock of the Opelousas Railroad Company. Under such circumstances it would be but proper for the City Council to join, in an official capacity, the movement on foot to petition Congress.

We hope to see, within a few years that important line of communication completed, and we wish, therefore, to see the company restored in the possession of the land grant that had been conferred upon it.

From the New Orleans Daily Picayune, December 25, 1867.

OPELOUSAS RAILROAD LAND GRANT.—A bill has been introduced in Congress, having for its object the forfeiture of the land grants to southern railroads. We propose to show that the annulment of the grant to the New Orleans, Opelousas, and Great Western Railroad would work great and irreparable injury to all classes of our citizens, of whatsoever race, color, or condition, and particularly to the freedmen of Louisiana.

This road is intended to connect New Orleans with the railroad system of Texas, and to open for settlement and development the whole of that fertile region now almost a wilderness, because only of its remoteness from and inaccessibility to the New Orleans market—the western and southwestern portions of Louisiana. The United States and the State of Louisiana here own several millions of acres of land, equal to any in the country, which have remained unsold for a quarter of a century for want of railroad communication with New Orleans. Here is a country unsurpassed for fertility and for healthfulness of climate, capable of supporting a large population, and of affording homesteads for tens of thousands of families, which only can be made available and desirable for colonization by means of railroads. Would it not be a wise policy to aid and encourage the construction of the necessary railroads? The quantity of

land accruing to the road under the grant, about 700,000 acres, is a mere fraction of what remains to the General Government and to the State of Louisiana. The State of Louisiana alone owns about 1,400,000 acres within the limits of the railroad grant, or double the quantity donated to aid in the construction of the road, besides millions of acres between the railroad grant and the sea-coast. The completion of the railroad would create a demand for these State lands, and afford a fund for rebuilding the Mississippi levees and reclaiming the alluvial lands from overflow. Now, the State lands in the Mississippi valley cannot be sold, because they are annually overflowed, and the so-called swamp lands in the prairie and pine woods uplands of the west and southwest are unsaleable, because they are too remote from market. Aid in the building of the railroad, and the sale of the one will furnish the means for reclaiming and selling the other.

No better terms could be made with the General Government, or State, for homestead settlements, than with the railroad company; for it is the policy of land grant roads to sell on long credit and on easy terms, to encourage settlements and increase business, and lands can be thus paid for in labor, cross-ties, lumber, etc. The construction of the railroad would give profitable employment to thousands of laboring freedmen, and the use of the road, when built, would make their homesteads valuable and enable them to sell what their lands would produce. The maintenance of the road itself, after it is built, would give employment to a large number. With the railroad, the country will be settled up; without it, it will remain as before, a comparative wilderness, of no use or benefit to any.

Who constitute the Opelousas Railroad Company? Its stockholders. Who are the stockholders? The total payments on stock subscriptions amount to something less than \$3,255,000

City of New Orleans	.	.	.	\$1,500,000
State of Louisiana	.	.	.	650,000
Parishes or counties	.	.	.	430,000
Individuals, South and North	.	.	.	675,000
				————— \$3,255,000

The city of New Orleans and the State of Louisiana, therefore, own \$2,150,000, or about two-thirds of the whole stock.

The Opelousas Railroad is therefore a road belonging principally to the city of New Orleans and the State of Louisiana, and the forfeiture and annulment of its land grant would be a heavy loss to the State. The bonds of the city and State issued for stock must remain a burden upon both, even if, by the loss of the grant, the road is forced into bankruptcy, sold out to the

bondholders, and the entire stock, public and private, is lost, while the extension and completion of it is postponed indefinitely.

The history of the land grant is as follows: On the 3d of June, 1856, a grant of six sections of land per mile of road was made by Congress, on the conditions that the whole road, 258 miles in length, should be completed in ten years, and that the lands so granted could only be sold opposite each consecutive twenty miles of road built. About 700,000 acres of land were, under this grant, selected and conveyed to the company; but it took the land officers of the United States five years to select the lands and complete the transfer, or until 1861, too late to make sales. Again, no vacant lands of any value or quantity were found subject to the grant, except opposite the last 130 miles of the line; and these, under the conditions specified, could not be sold until the road was completed opposite them. The company expended quite a large amount for selections, listing, examinations and preparations for sale, but out of the 700,000 acres conveyed to them they sold only one hundred and seventy-seven acres. Up to the present time, therefore, the land grant, instead of aiding in the construction of the road, has only been an expense, and through no fault of the railroad company. Furthermore, the company has always been held to the terms of the grant, and have cheerfully complied therewith in respect to the transportation of Government troops, material, etc.

The United States realized a very large amount, in gold, from the sales at auction, at Opelousas, of the Government reserved sections within the grant limits, which for the reason that they had been withheld from sale for several years, and the railroad being extended through them, brought high prices. The railroad company could not sell in this manner for reasons above stated.

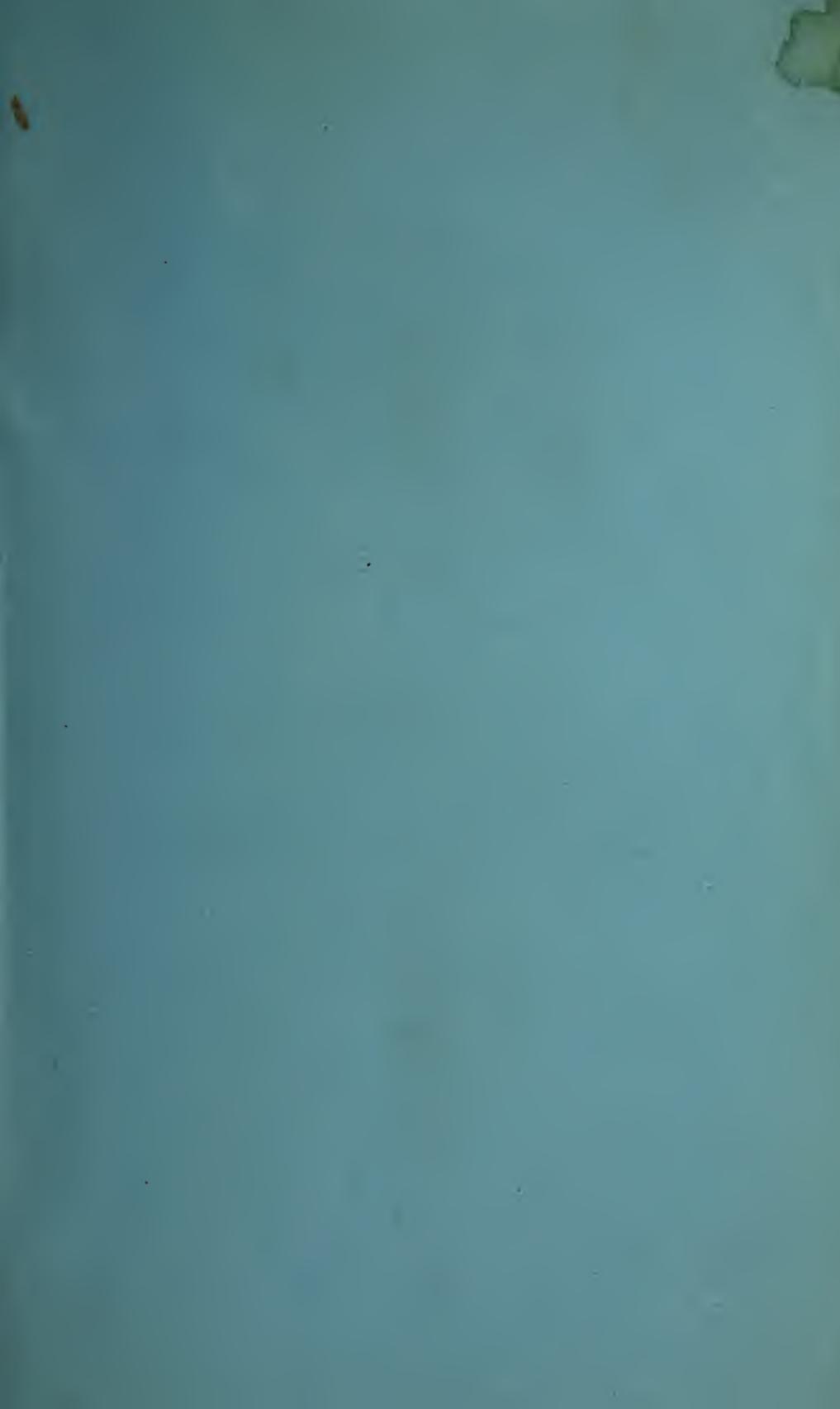
So far the United States has been the only gainer by the grant, in sales of land and in transportation over the roads as above explained.

But for the interruption which occurred in 1861 and since, to the work of constructing the road, the N. O. O., and G. W. Railroad would, beyond a doubt, have been completed within the limit of the time mentioned in the grant. Eighty miles of road were completed and in operation; eighty miles were graded ready for track laying, and the work of graduation was in course of rapid extension towards the terminus on the Sabine river. Rails and ties were contracted for, and means were provided to complete the whole road rapidly. Owing to causes beyond the control of the railroad company, the road was not completed within the limit of time, and the grant lapsed; but, as the Hon.

Mr. Julian has justly stated to Congress recently, the company have faithfully and fully complied with the terms of the grant except as to time.

The question now is, shall the grant be renewed and increased as has been done to all the land grant railroads in Arkansas, or shall it be declared forfeited and annulled? If it is renewed and increased, in agreement with the policy adopted towards railroads in Arkansas and other States, and towards the great Pacific Railroad, we are certain that means can be raised to complete the Opelousas road to and into Texas. Its extension and completion would result in incalculable benefit to every citizen of New Orleans and Louisiana, and also to the State and United States as great landed proprietors. It would give employment and homes to thousands now in want and destitution. The completion of the road and the saving to the city of New Orleans and the State of their investments in its stock, are matters of the very highest importance, for this stock then would be second in value to none in the country, and would contribute largely towards the expenses of the State and city governments, and thus diminish taxation.

The Convention now assembled could not do anything more conducive to the public good than to urge upon Congress to extend the Opelousas land grant, and aid in the completion of this, to us, all-important public work. Now, more than ever before, we need the railroad connection with Texas. The successive overflows of the Mississippi valley have caused the ruin of the planting interest, while trade and business of all kinds are fearfully depressed. Give us a railroad to Texas, and we are saved; renew the land grant, and we will have the railroad.





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